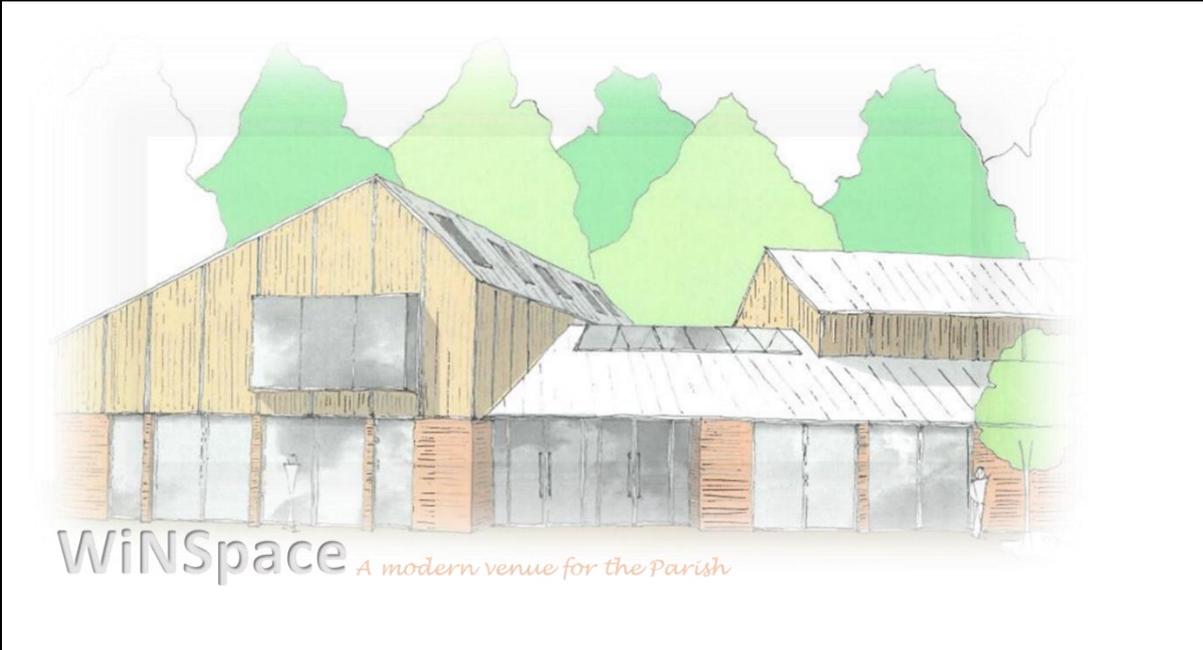


Winscombe Community Association (‘WCA’)

WiNSpace Summary of the ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT Report Winscombe New Space: ‘WiNSpace’ Project



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ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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1 Introduction

For any development, it is important to understand what the effects on the local plant and animal habitats are: during the construction, the on going effects after it has been completed and to look at what can be done to mitigate and improve. To ensure this happens the planning authorities require surveys and assessments to be completed and reported on.

This is particularly important for the Community Centre development site as we are:

- In a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for Greater and Lesser Horseshoe bats which are of international importance
- Within 2km of 3 nationally important Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Adjacent to Local Nature Reserves (LNR)

2 What the reports needs to established is

- the baseline ecological conditions existing on Site at the time of survey
- To determine likely significant effects resulting from the proposals upon the ecological features identified within the assessment.
- To assess whether the proposals are likely to be in accordance with relevant nature conservation legislation and planning policies.
- To identify where further surveys to establish baseline conditions, inform assessment or develop mitigation or compensatory measures are required.
- To identify how mitigation or compensation measures will be secured, maintained and monitored.
- To identify ecological enhancements to be carried out and how they will be implemented, maintained and monitored.

To meet this planning requirement, the Architects employed the services of an Ecological Consultancy, Clarkson & Wood. This has resulted in a report being written and will be supplied to the planning authorities as part of our planning application. This summary is intended to provide an overview of that report and to provide a set of conclusions made by the WiNSpace committee. Much of the information has been taken from the Ecological Impact Assessment report from Clarkson & Wood – March 2021

3 What are the WiNSpace committee conclusions

- The WiNSpace committee fully understands the impacts that developments such as the community centre has on local ecology. However, by taking on board the advice of the Ecological consultants, we will hopefully provide benefits to both the Parish community and the local wildlife. With the support of local wildlife groups and community engagement we can hopefully create a hub for not only inside activities but increase awareness of the environment outside and the local area
- By fully acknowledging that we were in a Special Area for Conservation, the need to mitigate the effects of the building, carpark and its location on the field were designed in at an early stage. Therefore, we will hopefully achieved the difficult balancing act of having no overall impact on the local ecology whilst minimising the effect on the neighbouring houses.

- By developing meadow and wildlife areas on the WCA site, including: bird, bat, habitat pile/hibernaculum (homes for amphibians/reptiles) and the careful selection of additional trees and shrub planting, we will increase habitats for the species that exist on the WCA site and encourage wildlife to spread from our neighbours land (Millennium Green, Strawberry line and local gardens) for the benefit of all.
- It is clear to the committee our biggest ecological challenge is light spillage and the effect that has on foraging bats along the strawberry line. Our Architects, by working closely with the Ecologists, have put together a number of site and building design features, which will not only minimise the effects but by including features such as meadow areas provide an actual overall habitat improvement

4 What did the Ecologist Consultancy do

1. A walkover survey within the red boundary line (see figure 2) undertaken on 5 October 2020 by two ecologists. This included the assessment of all habitats on site, as well as external and internal inspections of all buildings
2. One walked transect survey was undertaken on 9 September 2020 by an ecologist to record bat activity on site during the evening (see figure 2 for route taken)
3. Deployed two static bat detectors within the site (see figure 2 for positions) on two occasions; once in September and once in October to record bat activity over 10 nights
4. A desk top survey to obtain known and recorded information of wildlife in the local area, within 5km from the Site, using Natural England/DEFRA web-based MAGIC map database

5 What were the key findings

1. Buildings 1 and 2 were assessed as having low potential for roosting bats, as well as offering nesting bird potential, whereas Buildings 3 and 4 were considered negligible. (see figure 1 for building numbers)
2. A potential badger sett was found at the northern end of Building 4, and a trail camera was deployed for three weeks. No evidence of badger activity was noted
3. The site was considered to be of potential ecological value to a number of receptors such as birds, reptiles and dormice, as well as being an important commuting corridor for light-sensitive bats along the neighbouring Strawberry Line.

6 Recommendations and conclusions from the Ecology Report

- Buildings 1 and 2 will require a further dusk emergence survey to establish ecological baselines for bats.
- Mitigation and enhancement measures have been proposed in order to ensure that biodiversity on site is protected and enhanced by the development.
- To monitoring the potential badger sett prior to Building 4 demolition and
- The presence of an Ecologist during roof stripping works of Buildings 1 and 2.
- The construction of a new building has the potential to result in an adverse increase in light spill onto the western boundary of site. In order to sufficiently mitigate impacts resulting from the development proposals upon the wildlife species the creation of a sensitive lighting plan, as well as additional measures to reduce light spill needs to be implemented in order to minimise adverse effects on the neighbouring Strawberry Line, the North Somerset and Mendip bat SAC and any light-sensitive bat species using the site.

- A Biodiversity Impact Assessment score has been calculated using Natural England’s Biodiversity Metric 2.0 Calculation Tool, in order to evaluate the amount of new habitat required to result in no net biodiversity loss for the project. It is estimated that the project will result in a 12.21% new gain within the current proposals. (See Figure 5)
- It is proposed that a Construction Environmental Management Plan, a Landscape Ecological Management Plan, a Landscaping Plan and a Lighting Strategy are prepared for the Site.
- The proposed development is a relatively small-scale development in the context of the local landscape and will provide much-needed community space for local individuals and interest groups. It is considered unlikely that the proposed development will have any significant impacts, either directly or indirectly, on most of the designated sites identified in the desk study.
- If the actions outlined within the CEMP and the mitigation to prevent light spill are adhered to, it is not expected that there will be any negative residual effects on the North Somerset and Mendip Bat SAC or the Strawberry Line (Cheddar Valley Railway LNR).

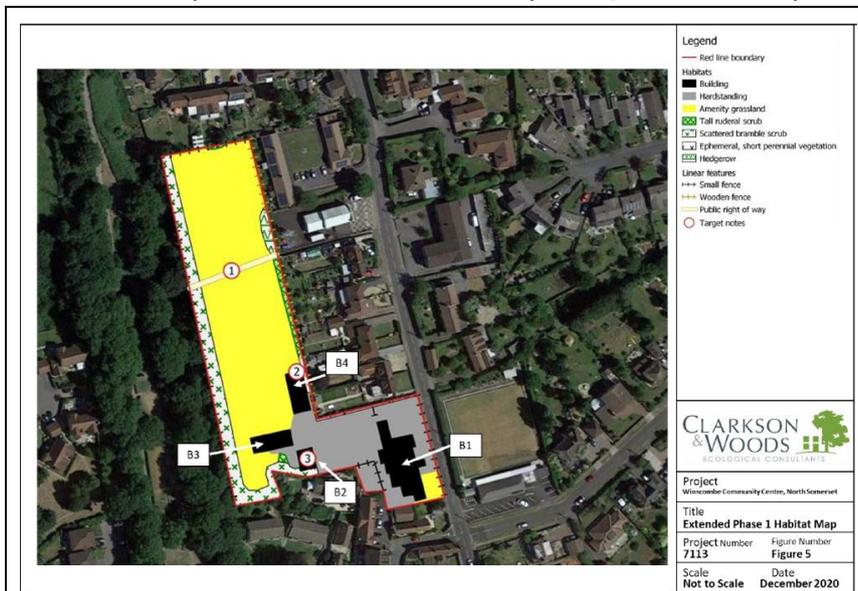


Figure 1: - Location of buildings

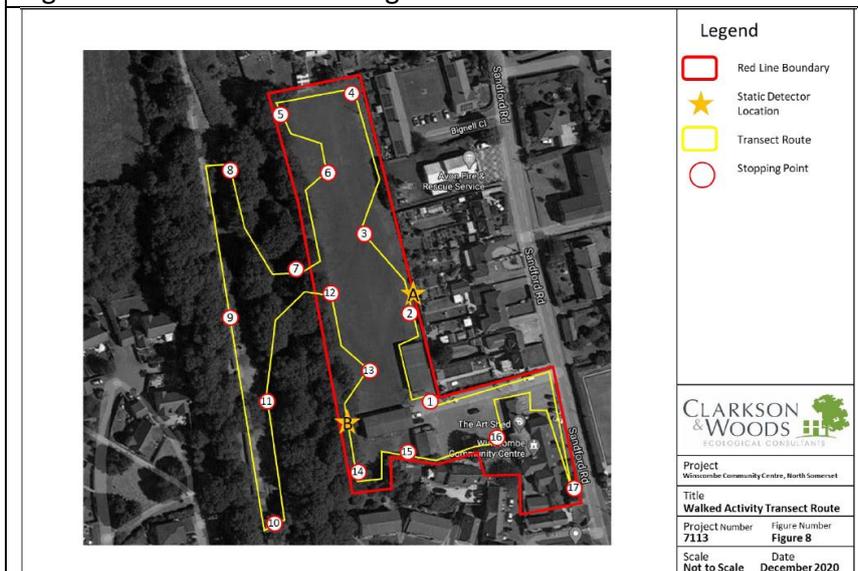


Figure 2:- Survey routes and static locations

7 Summary of Bats Survey

The Site itself offered a poor diversity of habitats for foraging bats due to it being mostly formed of amenity grassland and opportunistic ephemeral and ruderal vegetation and was therefore assessed as being of low suitability as per the BCT Guidelines. The Strawberry Line path which ran along the entire western Site boundary provided an unlit linear feature for commuting bats and offered moderate to high suitability for foraging and commuting bats. The Site itself is therefore likely to provide habitat for opportunistic foraging, as well as important connectivity to local areas of woodland and the North Mendip and Somerset Bat SAC

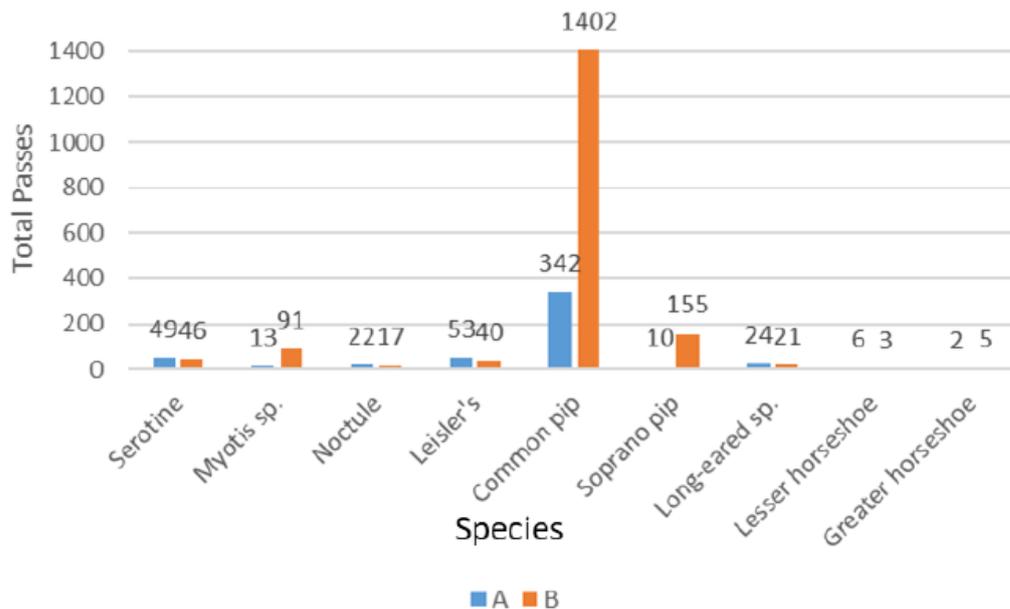
The information below gives the results of the walked and static bat surveys. Note the numbers of recordings relate to the numbers of passes that a bat or bats passed the detectors, so are not a total of bats which come onto the WCA site but provides an indication of species and abundance.

Bat Survey Data

Figure 3: Walked transect survey results – See figure 1 for walked route. Data is for one evening in September

| Species | No. Passes |
|---------------------|------------|
| Common pipistrelle | 64 |
| Soprano pipistrelle | 22 |
| Serotine | 11 |
| Myotis species | 3 |
| Nyctalus species | 1 |
| Long-eared | 1 |
| Lesser horseshoe | 1 |
| Total | 103 |

Figure 4: Static bat detectors surveys results, see figure 1 for location. Data is the total over 10 nights, 5 in September and 5 in October



Evaluation

The Site is considered to have **Local** importance for bat populations due to its proximity to the Strawberry Line and the presence of a number of light-sensitive and rarer bat species.

8 Summary of Designated Sites and non-designated sites – Summary from Report

| Feature | Importance | Comments |
|--|---------------|--|
| North Somerset and Mendip Bat SAC | International | The SAC is designated for supporting an important population of overwintering lesser horseshoe bats, as well as supporting both maternity and hibernation sites for greater horseshoe bats |
| Crook Peak to Shute Shelve Hill SSSI | National | This site comprises a wide range of habitats which includes ancient and secondary semi-natural broadleaved woodland, unimproved calcareous grassland and a complex mosaic of calcareous grassland and acidic dry dwarf-shrub heath. Four nationally rare and seven notable plant species have also been recorded. Natural England's SSSI |
| Max Bog SSSI | National | Max Bog is a calcicolous lowland mire with adjacent wet neutral grassland. Both vegetation types are nationally rare. This site is one of only four localities in Britain for the rare grass species <i>Gaudinia fragilis</i> . |
| Banwell Ochre Caves SSSI | National | The five caves contain the most extensive and accessible yellow ochre workings in the Mendip area. |
| Cheddar Valley Railway LNR (Strawberry Line) | Local | Also known as the Strawberry Line, habitats along the line include dense scrub, rough grassland and a network of rhynes and ditches. Species of bird, bat, amphibians and reptiles are supported within this site. |
| Slader's Leigh LNR | Local | The site comprises a wildflower meadow surrounded by ancient hedgerows. It is one of the few remaining areas of unimproved grassland in the Vale of Winscombe. It supports over 130 species of plant and 21 species of butterfly. |

9 Habitat Survey – Summary from Report

| Feature | Importance | Comments |
|--------------------------------------|------------|--|
| Amenity grassland | Site | Amenity grassland measured approximately 0.5 ha, covering the entire northern half of the Site. It was dominated by perennial ryegrass |
| Scattered bramble scrub | Site | A line of bramble scrub ran the length of the western boundary of Site, between the amenity grassland and the adjacent Strawberry Line. Areas of scrub were not dense or well-established, rather the species there had grown opportunistically due to lack of cutting and were dominated by bramble |
| Ruderal vegetation | Site | This habitat was dominated by nettle in most places Ruderal vegetation was present in small, localised patches within the southern part of the Site between Buildings 2 and 3, as well as along the eastern boundary adjacent to neighbouring residential gardens. This habitat was sparse and not well-established within the Site, |
| Ephemeral/short perennial vegetation | Site | A small amount of ephemeral and short perennial vegetation was present north of the main area of hardstanding and just east of Building 4 No species was dominant within this habitat |
| Buildings and hardstanding | Negligible | The Site contained four separate buildings which varied in structure and age, as well as a substantial area of hardstanding, comprising an approximate area of 1,500m ² |
| Hedgerows and trees | Site | There were several semi-mature trees on Site and along the west of the amenity grassland just outside the Site boundary, which were examined from ground level. One hedgerow was present on Site approximately halfway along the eastern boundary adjacent to the amenity grassland. |

| 10 Protected Species Survey and Species of Conservation Concern - Summary from Report | | |
|---|-------------------|--|
| Badgers | Site | A small gap was noted underneath the northern edge of B4 (TN2 refers) adjacent to the entrance ramp. Within the entrance, a single kernel of corn was seen, suggesting use by badger |
| Bats | Local | The assessment of the suitability of the Site for foraging and roosting bats was based on current guidance set out by the Bat Conservation Trust ¹⁰ the Site is considered to have Local importance for bat populations due to its proximity to the Strawberry Line and the presence of a number of light-sensitive and rarer bat species |
| Otter Water vole | Negligible | No records of water vole were noted within 2km of the Site |
| Dormice | Site (if present) | No signs of dormice were observed during the survey. The Site is considered to be well-connected to nearby suitable habitat to the west, and along the Strawberry Line. The trees and woodland along and outside the western boundary may provide habitat to support a population of dormice but it was considered unlikely that any individuals would utilise the Site itself given the lack of connective habitat |
| Amphibians | Site (if present) | No signs of amphibians were recorded on Site during the survey and there were no ponds on the Site itself. The Site was considered to be of sub-optimal value to amphibians due to the large areas of hardstanding and regularly mown amenity grassland. The scrub along the western boundary was considered to be of potential value for terrestrial foraging |
| Reptiles | Site (if present) | No signs of reptiles were noted within the Site survey, and much of the Site itself was not considered suitable for reptiles due to the large amount of hardstanding and regularly mown amenity grassland present. The boundary habitats, particularly scrub along the western boundary were considered to have potential to support a small population of common reptiles such as slow worm. Reptiles were considered more likely to use the Strawberry Line to the west of the Site, with it being unlikely that they would regularly use the Site itself. |
| Birds | Site | Both Buildings 1 and 2 were considered to have potential to support nesting birds. Evidence of swallows or house martins using the lower eaves of most northern part of Building 1 was present The Site offered little in the way of foraging opportunities for birds, however the presence of the Strawberry Line and adjacent gardens suggest that a variety of common garden birds probably use the Site for opportunistic foraging and commuting. |
| Invertebrates | Negligible | The majority of the Site comprised amenity grassland which provided little in the way of shelter and food sources for invertebrates. The neighbouring Strawberry Line to the west offered a more diverse assemblage of habitats, which may provide better conditions for invertebrates, which form an important part of the diet of bats, birds and reptiles. |
| Other Protected Species | Site | No signs of other species of conservation concern were noted within the Site survey however, anecdotes from a local resident suggested that hedgehogs had been noted within the Site on numerous occasions. Western boundary of the Site provided suitable foraging habitat for hedgehogs which, as well as the presence of numerous residential gardens backing onto the north and eastern boundaries, suggest that the Site has the potential to support this species. |

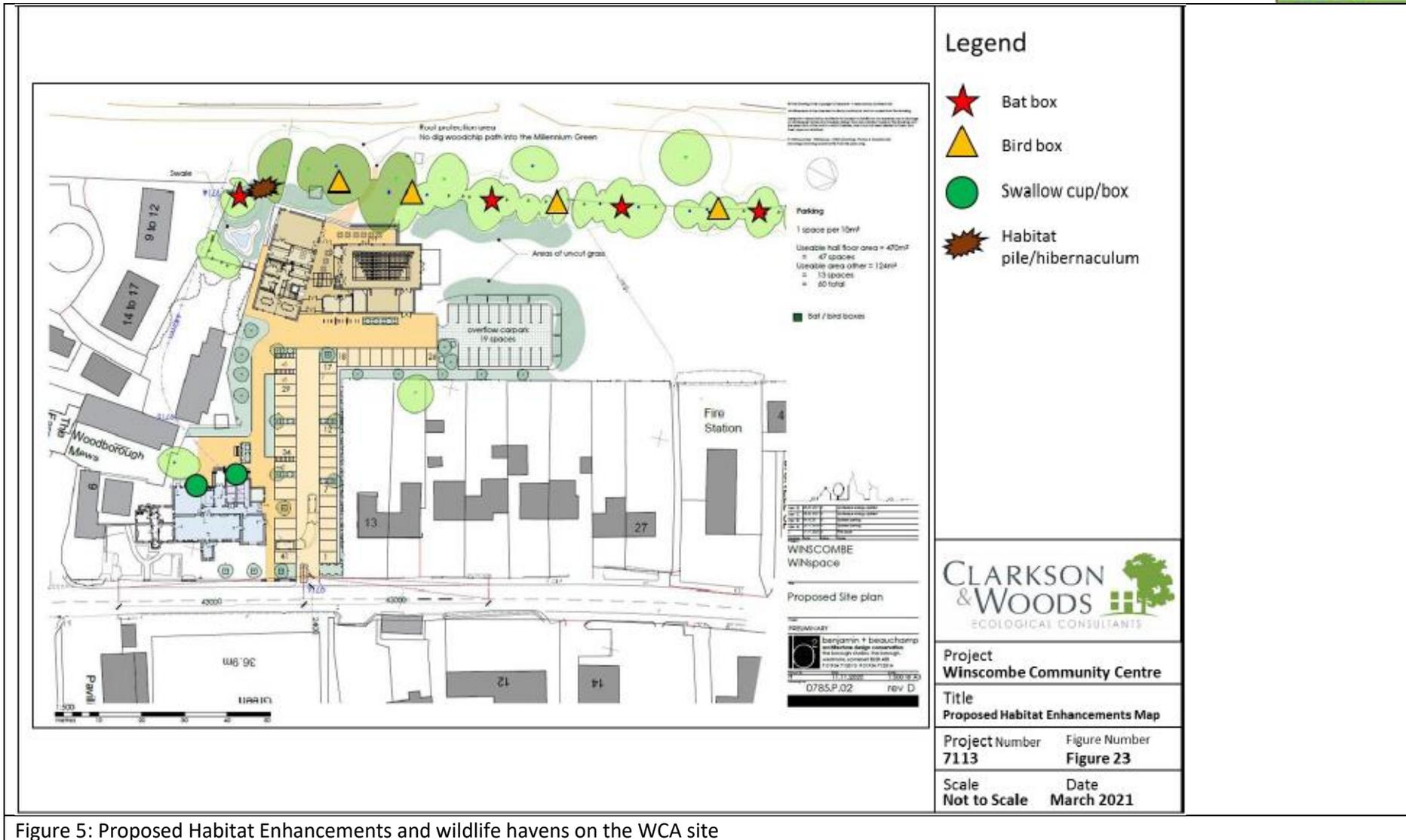


Figure 5: Proposed Habitat Enhancements and wildlife havens on the WCA site